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ABSTRACT

Written literature has evolved over a long period to an entity separate from oral tradition. Written literature aspired to perpetuation, to the creation of written "monuments." This aspiration caused authors to find the means of multiplying authentic versions so that they could popularize their "original" form unchanged. On the other hand, oral tradition involved creative changes with each retelling. Folktale, legend, and fairy tale are considered to be the three major genres of folklore. At times it is difficult to differentiate between what is considered fairy tale and what is considered folktale. The majority of scholars of the fairy tale--whether psychologically, sociologically, or literarily oriented--all agree that the fairy tale as a narrative genre centers on human kind and its inner states. The fairy tale reflects the pains of growing up, the process of finding out about the objective world and coming to terms with it, learning to accept difficult challenges, and having faith in happy outcomes. In spite of the vagueness and considerable universality of a tale, it is possible to associate a specific version of a fairy tale with a particular culture or community. Narrators consciously reflect the traditional beliefs, customs, and values of their own community in their narratives. In seeking to study the collective versus the individual nature of reader response, the Turko-Danish Fairytale Project takes the fairytale as its point of departure, with the belief that if there are any universal or collective aesthetic values, they can most easily be traced in the reader's response to fairy tales. (HTH)

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FAIRYTALE

An Interdisciplinary Turco-Danish Study of the Collective v. the Individual Nature of the Response to Literature

Report No. 3

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A. Oral Versus written literature

Written literature from its very birth has always been inseparably linked with oral tradition. The fertile inter-relations between the popular trends in written and oral literature are well-known (L. Dégh, Folklore and Society; G. Ortutay, "Principles of Oral Transmission in Folk Culture"; K. Marot, "Beginnings of the Greek Literature"). Homer, Dante, Shakespeare have all made great use of the style, technique and content of oral tradition. However the present study is not interested in exploring the dialectics of their action and reaction, it does not concern itself with those economic, social and historical factors which ensure the survival of oral narrative through the ages; the point at issue is the essential identity of their origin and the manner of their composition and reception.

Written literature is but a secondary phenomenon; it took a long evolution for it to arise as a separate entity from oral tradition. Even during the Middle Ages when written literature had started to make its way to the public orally peculiarities of oral performance were observed in the texts of written works. (It is possible to observe, for example, the traits of oral performance in T. Malory's Morte Darthur; G. Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales, or Troilus and Criseyde, Chrétien de Troyes' Arthurian Romances, Gottfried's Tristan, etc.. Infact, medieval narratives were generally the adaptations of well-known stories, and writers frequently made a point of stating that their texts were not original with them but that they learned of what they narrated through "a certain author." In some narrative books like The Canterbury Tales even the story-telling situation was described in full. In short the profound influence of oral tradition on written literature since the Middle Ages cannot be denied.

On the other hand, written literature from its very birth aspired to perpetuation, to the creation of written "monuments." This aspiration lead the authors to seek to attain authenticity, originality and uniqueness in composing their works. It also caused them to find the means to multiply the authentic versions so that they could popularize their "original" form unchanged. However while they jealously watched over the uniqueness of their products the writers were then forced to offer to their audience something that was at least partially novel both in content and form, they had to avoid repetition. All this lead to a ccnsiderable change in the social relationships between the author and his audience.

As regards oral traditions there is no question, in this domain, of a single definite form nor of a single definite content. Multiplication, in the oral tradition, means retelling, resinging, which, of course, involves a lesser or greater change of both content and form. Moreover, although the traditional material binds the creative individual, retelling nearly always involves a change. It is an act of variation which is at the same time creative. Therefore oral tradition which is basically performance oriented, is directed by the specific mood, the dramatic abilities of the narrator and the expectations of the audience. Written literature, however is fixed, non-dramatic and not directly guided by its audience.

The average narrator in the oral tradition knows the communal stock of tales - the tale body. He chooses from this communal, and wellknown material the parts which he wants to narrate and which the audience likes to hear over and over again. A change in audience may even cancel out an occasion for story telling. Briefly the structure of the community, its attitudes and moods, the nature and the time as well as the place of gathering can influence the oral narrator fashioning his text in such a way that one and the same tale recorded

under different conditions often shows decisive modifications (L. Dégh, Folklore and Society; K.S. Goldstein, D. Ben-Amos, eds., Folklore: Performance and Communication; G. Ortutay, "Principles of Oral Transmission in Folk Culture"). In written literature no such feed back or emposition from the audience is possible. The organic relationship between them is lost. Therefore an author aspiring to perpetuation and universal appraisal needs to make sure that his subject matter is not narrowly local and his form is clear, a natural development of tradition. Moreover he has to sense and reflect what, if any, is constant in human nature and associate that with the prominent human types and outstanding human problems of his age and his community. In short he has to have a synchronic as well as a diachronic approach to life and his own objective perception of it.

B. Folklore and Reader Response

Folk narratives being the prototypes of all narrative genres are once again good points of departure both for writers and for students of literature in discovering the correlations between what was appealing to the ancients of different communities, and what is appealing to contemporary readers of two or more countries. The results of such a study may give more of an insight into what may be, if any, that is most appealing to man regardless of time and environment. Moreover, international folk and fairy tale catalogues point out to us that certain themes, motifs, or characters are observed in the narratives of different cultural communities either in the same or in different centuries. An analysis of such tales may thus provide the project with a hypothesis about what can be called primordial in human nature, if any. Then this hypothesis can be tested by means of the methods in modern empirical research into reader response.

C. Folklore and Fairy Tale

"Folklore" is a word coined by W. Thoms in 1846. Folklorist do agree on what the term means. One of the most common criterion for definition is that it is in oral tradition. But, since in non-literate cultures almost everything is transmitted orally the criterion of oral transmission by itself is not sufficient to distinguish folklore from non-folklore. On the other hand, for purposes of research the scholars of folk literature have agreed to consider myths, legends, folktales, fairy tales, jokes, proverbs, riddles, chants, charms, blessings, leave-taking formulas, curses, oathes, insults, teases, toasts, tongue twisters, greetings, folk music, folk speech, folk similes, metaphores and nursery-rhymes as representatives of folk literature. However folk-tale, fairy tale and legend are considered to be the three major genres in this field. Each contains one or more of the above cited elements, and their generic division is one of tone in their approach to their content rather than a basic distinction of content or form.

Legends, as opposed to fairy tales, take a stand and call for the expression of opinion on the question of truth and belief. The legend tells explicitly or implicitly, almost without exception, that its message is or was believed sometime, by someone, somewhere. This general reference to belief is an inherent and the most outstanding feature of the folk legend (L. Dégh, A. Vassonyi, "Legend and Belief" in Folklore Genres, ed. D. Ben-Amos). Folktales, on the other hand, are generally centered around the customs and beliefs of a working community. The work "folk" can refer to any group of people who share at least one common factor. It can be a common occupation or language or religion. The group will have a common core of tradition which help to give it a sense of group identity - Jews, Negroes, railroadmen and so on. Even a

college community is a folk with is customs, stories and songs (A. Dundes, The Study of Folklore) and, very broadly speaking, stories created by these people expressing their own communal life and beliefs are called folktales. Fairy tale, however, is a genre which is less topical, less local, less belief-oriented, has less claims to literal truth (i.e. naturalism) and is more symbolic than the other two major genres of oral narratives. That is why if any literature can have any claims to universality it is the fairy tale. Goethe in his Prologue to Faust defines the fairy tale narrator as one "who offers many things (to his audience therefore) will offer some to many a one." The fairy tale"s specific style, its vagueness, its considerable freedom from the limitations of time and space, and its choice of "man" as the topic of its discussion enable the fairy tale narrator to appeal not to a specific group of people in a specific way but to masses in rather diverse ways.

D. The Nature of the Fairy Tale

When we turn to the fairy tale with the purpose of analysis, we realize that at times it is extremely difficult to differentiate between what is listed as fairy tale from that which is listed as folktale. In fact, folk scholars like Antti Aarne-Stith Thompson (in the Motif-Index of Folk Literature) and Vladimir Propp (in The Morphology of the Folktale) cite fairy tales as variations of folktales. Yet with the recent developments in abnormal psychology, fairy tales have started to get more exclusive attention. Psychologists Freud, Jung and Roheim associated fairy tales with dreams and claimed that fairy tales reflect symbolicly basic human nature which expresses itself in cross cultural and recurrent themes and motifs. They implied that, without such a universal and constant image of man, normal behavior could not be differentiated

from abnormal behavior. Bruno Bettelheim, another psychologist specialized in fairy tales has recently stated that fairy tales are the concrete expressions of abstract human anxieties and expectations. They appeal to all people in a different way at different stages of their growth. However, this quality of the fairy tales makes them exceptionally appealing and beneficial for children. A child who cannot understand what he is scared of gets over his fear after he encounters a malicious giant in a fairy tale, fights with it and overcomes it in the person of its hero.

Tolkien, a writer and critic of fairy tales also asserts the educational and liberating functions of fairy tales although he objects to a close association of this narrative genre with dreams. He says that fairy tales are the products of conceiving minds, they have a plan and a purpose whereas dreams don't. In discussing the nature of the fairy tale he states that "The magic of Fairie is not an end in itself, its virtue is in its operations: among these are the satisfaction of certain primordial human desires. One of these desires is to survey the depths of space and time. Another is to hold communion with other living things." "A story," says Tolkien, "may thus deal with the satisfaction of these desires, with or without the operation of either machine or magic, and in proportion as it succeeds it will approach the quality and have the flavour of fairy story."

The majority of the scholars of the fairy tale, whether psychologically, sociologically or literature oriented, all agree in regarding the fairy tale as a narrative genre centered on man and his inner states. It reflects the pains of growing up, the process of finding out about the objective world, coming to cerms with it and learning to accept difficult challenges and having faith in a happy outcome. The happiness of the hero, however, is isolated from that of his environment. In a fairy tale the hero is basically alone. He is full of

inner conflicts and his family, when presented, is full of tensions. But the tale describes neither these tensions nor these conflicts. They are displayed by means of situations and actions. In the "Cinderella" story when Cinderella"s mother dies, for example, we are <u>not</u> told that Cinderella grieves for her mother or mourns the loss or that she feels lonely, deserted and desperate but simply that "every day she went out to her mother's grave and wept." Similarly, in fairy tales qualities are translated into deeds - the good fairy proves her goodness by helping the humiliated, neglected girl Cinderella -; relationships are indicated through gifts, prohibitions or punishments - Cinderella's stepsisters and stepmother are jealous of her beauty and do not allow her to go to the ball-; and finally internal processes appear in the form of visual images-; In the tale "Snow White", for example, Snow White feels threatened by her stepmother; she does not know how to deal with this malicious woman or how to protect herself from her. This mental state of Snow White is exposed in the tale in the section where she is sent into the woods by her stepmother, is lost there, not knowing where to go and which way to turn; she is finally saved by the good dwarfs.

The heroes and heroines of fairy tales are generally quite passive. They are often guided by the advice, gifts and assistance of the people with whom they hardly have any organic relationship. However, there are a few fairy tales in which the hero takes the initiative and undertakes an adventure in order to materialize his wishes.

In general the heros of the fairy tale are cut out of the context of existence; they have no real surroundings, origin or posterity. We know that they live in a hut or a palace, dress well or have nothing to wear, but no more is told of their way of life, the people they associate with, or the place of their abode. In this lonely and undefined world

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the heros learn to be aware of the multi-facedness of reality, of the distinction and unity between being and appearing. The forest, the castle, and the forbidden room are at the same time places of danger and of important adventure, the wild animal can change to a greatful helper or to a radiant bridegroom, death can bring release or transformation to man. In some fairy tales a more central bearer of the theme of appearance and reality is the hero himself who appears to be stupid, lazy, dirty, awkward, ugly, and abnormal but then proves himself to be one who outshines all the others.

In spite of the vagueness and considerable universality of the tale it is possible to associate a specific version, variant, of a fairy tale with a particular culture or community. Narrators consciously or unconsciously reflect the traditional beliefs, customs and values of their own community in their narratives. The story of "Cinderella", for example, was first written down in China during the ninth century after Christ but no matter how it originated or spread it was taken up and memorized by large groups of people all over the world. "Cinderella" story as it is now universally known, is about the agonies and hopes which form the essential content of sibling rivalry; and about the degraded, neglected, poor young girl being saved from her malicious environment, and her winning out over her abuses. The version of this story as it is told in the East emphasizes the smallness of the foot. The Chinese, in accordance with their practice of binding women's feet associated foot size with virtue, distinction and beauty. The unrivaled tiny foot of Cinderella was, for them, a proof of her attractiveness and goodness. In the West, however , the section which displayed her as one "who had to live among the ashes" was elaborated. This was, for the Westerners, a symbol of being debased, irrespective of sex. In Germany, for example, there were stories in which such an ash-boy later becomes king, which

parallels Cinderella's fate. Aschenputtel is the title of the Brothers Grimm's version of the tale. The term originally designated a lowly, dirty kitchenmaid who must tend to the fireplace ashes. Malory, in England, used a similar motif in his Morte D'Arthur, a fifteenth century romance and made one of the knights of Round Table serve first as a kitchen knave, tending the fireplace, and then being once thus humiliated and abused he was able to rise the more and outshine all the other knights the more. In short, very broadly speaking, fairy tales are also, to some extent, changed and developed by the communities in which they are adopted and popularized. Each variant generally carries a communal stamp.

As the set-up of communities change and as written literature asserts itself the folktale narration dies out, fairy tale narration, however, does not lose its popularity or effectiveness. Fairy tales are, then, either collected in books in their authentic forms (though of course in those cases their nature undergoes some change), or they are adapted by individual authors to be read to children of different countries and classes. The themes and motifs of most surviving fairy tales also appear, in fragmented forms, in the stories of a great number of contemporary narratives and film scripts. For example, most modern stories centered on sibling rivalry or around good, poor, pretty young girls who are saved from their evil and wicked environment by handsome, rich, young men whom they eventually marry, or on people who are first humiliated but then win out over their abusers may be said to have their seeds in the "Cinderealla" story.

E. Rationale of the Present Study

In short, if any literature has any claims to wide and timeless appeal it probably is the fairy tale, and it is with

these concerns in mind that in seeking to study the collective versus the individual nature of reader response this study takes the fairy tale as its point of departure. If there are any universal or collective aesthetic values, then they can most easily be traced in the reader's response to fairy tales.

It is also worth noting that all scholars of folk tradition have so far analyzed either the thematic structure of the narratives or the actual event of performing or the background and personality of the narrators. No special attention has been directed to the audience (L. Dégh, "Survey of the Results in Folktale Research to the Present," Folktale and Society; Folklore: Performance and Communication, ed. D. Ben-Amos; R.M. Dorson, Current Folklore Theories). In written literature audience, of course, develops into the silent reader. The reader apears to have no control over the shaping of the story. Yet, just as the audience of a folktale or legend is of essential importance in the formation of a story, the reader of any written narrative should also, though indirectly, be of crucial importance in guiding the course of narration. Otherwise, the establishment of a meaningful communication between the author and the reader is doubtful.

Tradition, teller and audience work hand in hand in both processes. If this empirical study can test and can point out the expectations and the reactions of various groups of readers to three well-known fairy tales, and can find correlations between them it can bring to light, to some extent, what sort of works have lasting fame and popularity and why. It can then hope to work as a guide both to creative writers and to students of literature.